



Audit Scope:

This study evaluated the Department of Adult and Juvenile Detention's (DAJD) strategic, financial, and capital plans and analyses in response to projected changes in the adult inmate population and on planned use of existing and future jail capacity. The three main components of our analysis were the population forecast, how the county contracts and sets fees for jail services, and operational costs and efficiencies.

The County's Challenge:

The county's goals have been to accurately forecast and budget for the jail population to be served, when possible assist other jurisdictions that need jail beds, charge these jurisdictions a fair price to recoup costs, and ensure that the county will have enough beds to serve its own immediate and future needs. Balancing these goals has proven to be a difficult task, as events over the past several years have demonstrated.

Jail costs are continuing to rise while the inmate population has declined substantially. At the same time, the county is at risk of losing revenue if cities continue to reduce their use of the county's excess jail beds. Our report indicates how this risk can be mitigated, and how the county can increase its revenues and lessen the burden on county taxpayers, if the goal of reducing jail costs can be achieved.

Options contained in this report have a wide range of *potential* cost impacts in the millions of dollars, achieved through operational efficiencies and additional jail revenue. We identify a range of options to explore to achieve substantial cost savings, and we encourage jail management and staff to offer other ideas.

The key recommendation of this report envisions collaboration of county policy-makers and leadership, and continued engagement with the cities of King County to provide affordable inmate housing in the county's jails. Overall, the audit suggests that a comprehensive strategic and financial plan for jails is needed to ensure the county is managing the jails in an operationally sound and financially sustainable manner. Such a plan should provide a range of alternatives to consider as well as estimates of their potential fiscal impacts.

Recommendation 1

The King County Executive should develop a consolidated financial, strategic, and business plan for adult detention that addresses, identifies, and evaluates:

- Optimal use of county jail capacity.
- Options for reducing jail operating costs, including the possibility of using the jail at the Maleng Regional Justice Center for other purposes, other potential cost-saving opportunities identified in this report, and cost-saving strategies that may be suggested by jail management and staff.
- Alternative fee-setting strategies for jail services aimed at enhancing revenues in order to mitigate the financial stress on the criminal justice agencies in the county's public safety system.
- Partnering with cities in King County in pursuit of ensuring adequate and affordable regional jail capacity, with shared risks and a fair sharing of costs.

Upon receiving the proposed plan, the King County Council should provide policy guidance and make modifications as needed, and consider the plan for adoption.

Recommendation 2

The King County Council, in collaboration with the County Executive, should consider assigning adult detention population forecast responsibilities to an entity, such as the Economic Forecast Council, that can provide independent, timely, and transparent forecasts that are reliable and can be used to inform and support:

- County budget and program priorities
- Jail facility utilization and operations planning
- Jail fee setting
- Revenue projections
- Regional jail planning

Recommendation 3

The King County Council should consider requesting the executive to commission an independent analysis and business process mapping study of DAJD's intake, transfer, and release workload that:

- Identifies workload components and maps key processes of inmate intake, transfer, and release.
- Measures time required to provide security supervision, to complete tasks (time-motion or random moment study) and sets benchmark performance targets.
- Coordinates such study with any development by DAJD of an automated inmate transfer and release data system.
- Makes recommendations for staffing and other resources needed to address current workload, and changes in the nature and the volume of the workload.

Executive Response

The Executive:

- Partially concurred with Recommendation 1.
- Did not concur with Recommendation 2.
- Took no position on Recommendation 3 directed to council but commented that business mapping would be needed for development of a new IT system for ITR.

Council adopted provisos in the 2011 budget to address findings in this report.